

News Release

Upper Midwest Rural Health Summit on Fri., August 17, at the U of M Crookston to discuss rural health policy

By Judy Neppel, Elizabeth Tollefson, Kathryn Webster on Thursday, July 19, 2007

CROOKSTON, Minn. (July 19, 2007) – Concern for the future of rural health care has prompted the Minnesota Rural Health Association to join forces with counterparts in Montana and North Dakota to hold a rural health summit at the University of Minnesota, Crookston on Friday, August 17, 2007. The summit, to be held in Bede Ballroom in the Student Center, is open to anyone with an interest in the health and well being of rural people and communities across the upper Midwest.

The Summit will focus on the future of rural health care policy and feature key note presentations by Dr. Frank Cerra, senior vice president for health sciences of the University of Minnesota, Kristin Juliar, director of the Montana Office of Rural Health and Brad Gibbens, associate director of the University of North Dakota (UND) Center for Rural Health.

"This summit presents an exciting opportunity for leaders committed to a strong future for rural health care in this region," said Frank Cerra, M.D.

Jack Geller, president of the Center for Rural Policy and Development, and Liz Quam, past president of the Minnesota Rural Health Association will lead discussion about rural policy, followed by a presentation by Carleton Rider, from the Mayo Clinic Policy Center.

"This meeting provides a great opportunity to link rural health experts at the local, state and national level," said Kristin Juliar, director of the Montana Office of Rural Health. "Too often, solutions created for urban settings are poorly suited to delivering healthcare and improving health in our small towns and hospitals. Working across our three states, we can strengthen the voice of rural and frontier communities in shaping the nation's healthcare policies. "

"The Summit is an opportunity to gain fresh insights into health policy perspectives, to learn what is happening around the area, to develop new contacts with people dealing with issues similar to your own," said Brad Gibbens, associate director of UND's Center for Rural Health. "There is continuing discussion and interest in forming a similar association in North Dakota, so with the summit being co-sponsored by the Minnesota Rural Health Association, there is an opportunity for North Dakotans to ask questions and learn about this opportunity."

After a lunch of locally grown foods, a panel of health care staff representing congressional leaders will talk about health care reform at the federal level. The Summit will end with a series of short presentations from upper Midwest thought leaders who will offer their ideas about the future of rural health care.

"Our goal is to help people at all levels of the health care continuum to be better informed," said Barbara Muesing, president of the Minnesota Rural Health Association. "Health care is again in the spotlight, which makes this an ideal time to gather rural people to learn and discuss ways to reform the system."

The Upper Midwest Rural Health Summit is open to everyone, including health care providers, consumers, policy makers at all levels of government, area health education center staff and board members and people who want rural communities to thrive in the future.

For additional information about the health summit or to register, log on to www.mnruralhealth.org or contact Judy Neppel at 218-281-8323 (jneppel@umn.edu).

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